



[Home](#) › [Statistics](#) › [Classifications](#) › [Standard Australian Classification of Countries \(SACC\)](#) › 2016

 **Latest release**

Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC)

This classification was developed for use in the collection, storage and dissemination of all Australian statistical data classified by country

Reference period: 2016

Released 27/06/2016

On this page

- [Overview](#)
- [Building the classification](#)
- [About codes](#)
- [Coding index](#)
- [Using the classification](#)
- [Classification review](#)
- [Comparing classifications](#)
- [Economic classifications](#)
- [Data downloads](#)
- [Abbreviations](#)
- [History of changes](#)

Overview

About the classification

The Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) provides guidelines for consistent collection, aggregation and dissemination of statistics by country. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) endorses the use of this classification when collecting, aggregating and disseminating data relating to characteristics such as birthplace and country of residence. In addition to its use by the ABS, the SACC is also designed for use in the broader Australian

statistical community, including government agencies, private companies and community organisations.

The country names within the SACC reflect country titles recognised by the Australian Government. The ABS monitors changes in the official recognition of country titles by the Australian Government and updates the SACC as necessary to ensure the classification remains current. The identification of countries and country groups within the SACC does not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the ABS regarding the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Definition of 'country'

Countries are the most detailed categories of the classification (e.g. '1505 Samoa', '5204 Philippines'). While the majority of these categories are independent and sovereign nation states, a number of other national entities are also separately identified as countries within the classification. For example, the Caribbean island state of Martinique ('8416 Martinique') is separately listed within the classification even though it is a detached region of France rather than an independent nation state.

The SACC adopts a broad definition of 'country' that includes the following national entities:

- Sovereign nation states (e.g. Australia, Indonesia, Philippines)
- Administrative subdivisions within some sovereign states (e.g. England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are devolved administrations of the United Kingdom)
- External territories and dependencies (e.g. the Falkland Islands – a British overseas territory). These categories are discrete geographic areas with varying degrees of political and economic autonomy. In general, they are physically isolated from the country to which they are dependent.
- Regions under disputed ownership or control (e.g. Western Sahara region of North Africa).

The use of a broad definition of country within the SACC ensures that all current national entities of the world are within the scope of the classification.

Building the classification

The classification structure

The Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) has a three-level hierarchical structure that consists of major groups, minor groups and countries.

Major group

The major group level is the highest level of the classification. Each of the nine major groups of the classification contains between two and six geographically proximate minor groups.

Minor group

The minor group level is the middle level of the classification. Each of the 27 minor groups of the classification contains approximately five to twenty country categories.

Country

The country level is the base level of the classification. There are 255 country categories including four residual ('not elsewhere classified') categories. Residual categories are explained in 'About Codes'.

| Hierarchical Level | Example |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Major Group | 5 South-East Asia |
| Minor Group | 51 Mainland South-East Asia |
| Country | 5101 Myanmar |

Classification criteria

The main criterion by which SACC categories are aggregated to form broader levels of the classification is geographic proximity. The SACC structure is designed to ensure that progressively higher levels of the classification reflect progressively broader geographical units. For example, the principal reason that Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam are aggregated within the minor group '51 Mainland South-East Asia' is that these countries are in close geographic proximity with one another. Countries and minor groups that are not in close geographic proximity with one another are not aggregated within the same level of the classification.

Another important criterion of classification used within the SACC is that of category groups reflecting some level of shared social, cultural, economic or political common ground. This criterion is secondary to the principle of geographic proximity and it is not applied uniformly across the classification. Nevertheless, this criterion can be used to guide the composition of major groups and minor groups where the principle of geographic proximity alone may be insufficient.

An example of the application of this secondary criterion is the organisation of Pacific countries at the minor group level of the classification. In broad terms, the cultural geography of the Pacific can be understood in terms of its Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian heritage. These broad cultural contours of the Pacific inform the structure of the classification such that 'Melanesia', 'Micronesia', and 'Polynesia' are each separately listed as minor groups within the 'Oceania and Antarctica' major group of the classification.

In summary, the minor groups and major groups of the classification generally represent geographically contiguous groups of countries or regions that share some social, cultural, economic or political characteristics.

Statistical balance

As a general principle, a classification used for the dissemination of statistics should not have categories at the same level in its hierarchy which are too disparate in their population size. That is, similar numbers of real world entities should be classified to each category at a particular level. This approach serves to minimise large variations in standard errors and the suppression of cells in statistical tables at particular levels of the structure when using output from sample surveys. It also allows the classification to be used effectively for the cross-tabulation of aggregate data and the dissemination of data from sample surveys.

Categories which have been defined to reflect the real world, however, will not always be statistically balanced. To force categories to conform to size limitations would mean that the categories would not always be meaningful or useful.

In developing the SACC, a balance between these competing requirements was sought. The application of the classification criteria generally led to a balanced classification structure. However, considerations of statistical balance, practicality and usefulness were also used in developing the structure including:

- splitting Europe into two major groups
- combining the two American continents to form one major group, and
- creating the minor group 'United Kingdom, Channel Island and Isle of Man' due to its statistical significance in Australian migration.

2011 Census data for 'Birthplace' aggregated to the SACC major group level are:

| SACC Major Group | 2011 Census 'Birthplace' Counts |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Oceania and Antarctica | 15 630 945 |
| 2 North-West Europe | 1 441 874 |
| 3 Southern and Eastern Europe | 689 180 |
| 4 North Africa and the Middle East | 305 869 |
| 5 South-East Asia | 701 865 |
| 6 North-East Asia | 535 484 |
| 7 Southern and Central Asia | 500 745 |
| 8 Americas | 223 749 |
| 9 Sub-Saharan Africa | 272 520 |

About codes

Standard code scheme

The classification levels and classification codes are related as follows:

- Major groups have one-digit codes;
- Minor groups have two-digit codes; and
- Countries have four-digit codes.

The relationship between codes and classification levels is illustrated in the following example of the categories in the 'Southern and Eastern Europe' major group:

| Major group | Minor group | Country |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3 SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPE | | |
| | 31 Southern Europe | |
| | | 3101 Andorra |
| | | 3102 Gibraltar |
| | | 3103 Holy See |
| | | 3104 Italy |
| | | 3105 Malta |
| | | 3106 Portugal |
| | | 3107 San Marino |
| | | 3108 Spain |
| | 32 South Eastern Europe | |
| | | 3201 Albania |
| | | 3202 Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| | | 3203 Bulgaria |
| | | 3204 Croatia |
| | | 3205 Cyprus |
| | | 3206 North Macedonia |
| | | 3207 Greece |
| | | 3208 Moldova |
| | | 3211 Romania |
| | | 3212 Slovenia |
| | | 3214 Montenegro |
| | | 3215 Serbia |
| | | 3216 Kosovo |
| | 33 Eastern Europe | |
| | | 3301 Belarus |
| | | 3302 Czechia |
| | | 3303 Estonia |
| | | 3304 Hungary |
| | | 3305 Latvia |
| | | 3306 Lithuania |
| | | 3307 Poland |
| | | 3308 Russian Federation |
| | | 3311 Slovakia |
| | | 3312 Ukraine |

Minor group categories have two-digit codes where the first digit represents the parent major group code and the second digit represents the sequence of minor groups within the parent major group (e.g. '3 Southern and Eastern Europe' contains '31 Southern Europe', '32 South Eastern Europe' and '33 Eastern Europe').

Countries have four-digit codes where the first two digits represent the parent minor group code and the final two digits represent the sequence of countries within a minor group (e.g. '31 Southern Europe' contains '3101 Andorra', '3102 Gibraltar', '3103 Holy See', '3104 Italy', '3105 Malta', '3106 Portugal', '3107 San Marino' and '3108 Spain').

Neither countries nor minor groups have codes ending with '0' or '9' because these codes have specific functions within the code scheme, as explained below.

Residual 'nec' codes

Residual or 'not elsewhere classified' (nec) categories are designed to capture specific geographic or national entities that are not separately identified in the main structure of the classification due to their low statistical significance. These categories are assigned four digit codes where the first two digits identify the parent minor group and the final two digits are '99'. Four residual categories are included in the classification:

- 1199 Australian External Territories, nec
- 1599 Polynesia (excludes Hawaii), nec
- 8299 South America, nec
- 9299 Southern and East Africa, nec.

The purpose of 'nec' categories is to ensure the classification is exhaustive of all geographic areas and national entities of the world, including those with very small populations and those with limited or obscure national sovereignty. For example, the French southern territory islands between Madagascar and Mozambique have insufficient populations to justify their separate inclusion within the main structure of the SACC. However, these territories are included within the SACC in the 'Southern and East Africa, nec' category so that the 'Southern and East Africa' minor group remains exhaustive of all national entities in the region.

The 'nec' codes are part of the main structure of the SACC and these codes have equal status with all other country codes.

Supplementary 'nfd' codes

Supplementary or 'not further defined' (nfd) codes are used to code responses that are insufficiently specific for the main classification structure to be used. For example, the response 'Southern Europe' to a question about country of birth could not be coded to any of the particular countries of the 'Southern Europe' minor group due to its lack of specific country level information. Nevertheless, such a response should be coded to the minor group level '3100 Southern Europe, nfd' because sufficient geographic specificity was provided for this level of the classification. Major groups also have 'nfd' codes to accommodate responses that may be more general than those allocated to minor group 'nfd' codes (e.g. the country of birth response 'Americas' could be coded to '8000 Americas, nfd').

The 'Not further defined' codes for minor groups and major groups can be distinguished by

the number of '0' digits in the final digits of the code. Minor group 'nfd' codes end with '00' and major group 'nfd' codes end with '000'. The 'nfd' codes are supplementary codes which means these codes are not part of the SACC main structure.

Other supplementary codes

In addition to 'nfd' supplementary codes, other types of supplementary codes are used for inadequate data responses, former political entities and for economic statistics.

Four-digit codes commencing with '000' are used for inadequate data. These codes facilitate the coding of survey responses and other data which cannot be coded to categories in the classification (including 'nfd' codes). For example, '0000' is used to code inadequately described or unintelligible responses and '0003' is used to code 'not stated' responses. The '000' supplementary codes are not part of the classification structure and these codes are designed only to record responses where there is inadequate data.

Four-digit codes commencing with '09' are designed to code responses relating to defunct political entities. Supplementary codes are included for these entities because the information may still be regarded as useful for statistical purposes (e.g. continuity of historical time series). These codes facilitate precise coding of data that would otherwise be lost or coded to a broader category of the classification, providing a higher level of precision compared to 'nfd' supplementary codes (e.g. '0913 Former Yugoslavia, nfd' has greater specificity compared to '3200 South Eastern Europe, nfd').

Supplementary codes for selected economic entities are described in the 'Economic Classifications' page of the SACC classification.

Coding index

Coding non-standard responses

Responses provided in statistical and administrative collections do not always reflect the official or formal names of categories in the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC). For example, 'China' may be a typical survey response to a question about country of birth but it does not exactly match the title of the category '6101 China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)'. The accurate coding of country responses within ABS collections is carried out by automated coding systems that link high-frequency responses to their corresponding country categories in the SACC via a coding index. These automatic coding systems are based upon the information contained in the SACC population index.

SACC index

The SACC population index connects more than one thousand high-frequency country responses to each of their corresponding country codes within the SACC. For example, within the SACC population index the response 'Abu Dhabi' is coded to the SACC category '4216 United Arab Emirates' because this category represents the country in which the city of Abu Dhabi is located. Other entries in the index are formal country titles, alternative spellings, misspellings, abbreviations and former titles of countries. The contents of the index are drawn from high-frequency responses identified in statistical surveys and in the 2011 Census.

The SACC population index may be requested by contacting standards@abs.gov.au (<mailto:standards@abs.gov.au>).

Coding rules

The following coding rules outline the parameters used to build the entries of the coding index:

- Responses which match exactly with an index entry are given the code allocated to that index entry
- Responses which contain additional information or official titles compared to SACC category titles are coded to the relevant SACC country code (e.g. 'Syrian Arab Republic' is coded to '4214 Syria')
- Responses which use alternative spelling or common misspelling compared to SACC category titles are coded to the relevant SACC country code (e.g. 'Tadzhikistan' is coded to '7207 Tajikistan')
- Responses which use common abbreviations (e.g. 'Aust', 'Korea sth', 'Eng'), initials (e.g. 'USA', 'NZ', 'UAE'), foreign language titles (e.g. 'Deutschland', 'Espana', 'Ceska Republika', 'Eire'), nationalities (e.g. 'Algerian', 'Indian', 'Malaysian'), or informal titles (e.g. 'Aussie', 'Oz') are coded to the relevant SACC country code
- Responses which relate to the former names of contemporary countries (e.g. 'Persia', 'Ceylon', 'Siam', 'Rhodesia') are coded to the contemporary SACC country code to which the response relates
- Responses which relate to defunct national or political entities are coded to the relevant supplementary code (e.g. 'Czechoslovakia' is coded to '0914 Czechoslovakia, nfd') in the first instance and (if applicable/required) may be secondarily coded to a relevant minor group supplementary code (e.g. '0914 Czechoslovakia, nfd' may be coded to '3300 Eastern Europe, nfd') for data output purposes
- Responses which relate to provinces, cities or regions within countries (e.g. 'Sumatra', 'Rio de Janeiro', 'California') are coded to the SACC country code in which those provinces, cities or regions are located
- Responses that relate to cities or regions that have been subject to changes in national boundaries (e.g. 'Danzig' was previously part of Germany but is presently part of Poland)

are coded to national boundaries within which the city or region exists at the time of data collection

- Responses which cannot be identified as relating directly to a separately identified country in the classification are assigned a residual category code or a supplementary nfd code.

The coding rules outlined above can also be used as a guide for coding responses that may not already be covered within the index.

Using the classification

Editing specifications

The full range of Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) country codes should be included at all stages of statistical production including verifying input codes, manipulating data, aggregating data to higher level categories and deriving output items and tables.

The valid range of codes consists of the following:

- all codes in the main structure of the classification, and
- all codes in the 'Supplementary Codes for the Classification Structure' list.

The valid range of codes are shown in Tables 1 and 2 of the SACC data cube (accessible from the Data downloads section).

Supplementary codes in the list 'Supplementary Codes for Former Countries and other Geographic Entities' are not within the valid code range for any of the categories of the standard classification but these codes can still be used to preserve data that would otherwise be lost. When deriving output items for the classification structure, data coded to these supplementary codes are included in the data for '0000 Inadequately Described'. The 'Supplementary Codes for Former Countries and other Geographic Entities' are shown in the SACC data cube (accessible from the Data downloads section).

Storage and presentation of data

The ABS recommends all data be captured and stored at the most detailed level of the classification. Storing data at the most detailed level of the classification enables more detailed and complex analysis, and facilitates comparisons with other data sets. The hierarchical structure of the classification allows users the flexibility to output statistics at the level of the classification which best suits their needs if data is collected at the most detailed level. For example, data can be presented at major group, minor group or country

level depending upon statistical requirements. If necessary, significant countries within a minor group can be presented separately while the remaining countries within the minor group are aggregated. The same principle can be used to highlight significant minor groups within a major group.

Countries from different minor groups should not be added together to form an aggregation that is not included in the classification framework structure as this corrupts the application of the classification criteria and has repercussions for data comparability. Similarly, minor groups from different major groups should not be added together. In instances where some countries within a minor group are presented separately while the remaining countries within the minor group are aggregated, the group of aggregated countries should be labelled 'Other', or 'Other (minor group name)'.

Standard coding options

Further output options to those outlined above are provided within the classification to allow the continuation of time series and to enhance the usefulness of the classification in certain areas. These Standard Coding Options are shown in full in the SACC data cube (accessible from the Data downloads section) and are summarised below:

| Statistical Region | Description |
|----------------------------|--|
| Europe | In some circumstances it is necessary to present statistics for Europe as a whole rather than for the individual major groups; North-West Europe, and Southern and Eastern Europe. |
| Europe and the former USSR | This entity was a major group in the previous country classification (the Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics) and is provided for time series purposes. |
| Former USSR | This entity was a minor group in the previous country classification (the Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics) and is provided for time series purposes. |
| East Asia | The terms 'Asia' or 'Asian' are sometimes used to refer to the countries of North-East Asia and South-East Asia only. This grouping of culturally 'Asian' countries comprising an aggregation of the SACC major groups 'North-East Asia' and 'South-East Asia' is more appropriately referred to as 'East Asia'. |
| Asia | Users may wish to disseminate statistics under the broad heading 'Asia', or to refer to 'Asia' or use the adjective 'Asian' in thematic discussion or reports. However, for general statistical purposes, it is inappropriate to aggregate the minor group '42 Middle East' with the minor groups '71 Southern Asia' and '72 Central Asia' or with the major groups '5 South-East Asia' and '6 North-East Asia' (also commonly described as East Asia in combined output), as the countries from these regions are dissimilar in terms of their cultural, social and economic characteristics. |

Short names for publication

The country names used in the classification generally correspond to the short form country names used by the United Nations. In a few instances the country name is accompanied by extra information to precisely define the unit it represents, for example, 'China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)'.

Some of the names of the countries and groupings used in the classification are too long for use in all circumstances. For publications with space or character length constraints, a list of 15-character and 30-character names is shown in the SACC data cube (accessible from the Data downloads section).

Classification review

Scope of the review

In 2016 the ABS conducted a minor review of the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC). The review was conducted to ensure the classification was up-to-date, correct any errors in the classification, and to improve the index used to code responses. The conceptual model underpinning the classification was out of scope of this review.

Outcome of the review

The outcome of the 2016 review was that four substantive changes were made to SACC country titles. Consequent changes were made to ensure that revised country titles were applied in a consistent manner throughout the classification (e.g. in correspondence tables, list of differences with the equivalent New Zealand classification, short names for publications, etc.) and the coding index.

The 2016 minor review of the SACC resulted in the following substantive changes to the classification

| Code | SACC 2011, Version 2.3 | SACC 2016 |
|------|---|-----------------|
| 3206 | Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) | North Macedonia |
| 5101 | Myanmar, The Republic of the Union of | Myanmar |
| 8202 | Bolivia, Plurinational State of | Bolivia |
| 8216 | Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of | Venezuela |

Comparing classifications

Correspondences

Correspondences for the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) enable two-way comparison between the SACC 2011, Version 2.3 and SACC 2016. The correspondence tables itemise the code linkages between countries, detail links between major groups and minor groups, and indicate the changes to the SACC between the most recent previous version (2011, Version 2.3) and the current version. These correspondence tables are available in the SACC data cube, accessible from the Data downloads section.

The United Nations standard country or area codes

There is broad compatibility between the categories in the SACC and the list of [UN Standard Country or Areas Codes \(https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/\)](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/). While most categories of the classification schemes have identical country titles there remain a number of differences between the classifications.

Differences in the official recognition of and preferred terminology used to describe certain areas or regions have led to different country titles between the classifications in some instances (e.g. the SACC refers to 'Occupied Palestinian Territories'; the UN list refers to 'State of Palestine'). Other differences between the classification schemes reflect preferences for the use of short or extended country titles (e.g. the use of 'Laos' in the SACC and 'Lao People's Democratic Republic' in the UN list), and preferences in the SACC for certain output categories that are useful in the Australian context (e.g. the separate identification in the SACC of the administrative regions comprising the United Kingdom). Further differences between the classification schemes are evident at higher levels of the classifications reflecting different approaches to geographic aggregation and statistical balance in classification design.

In broad terms, the units and groupings of the two classifications are compatible and it is possible to correspond data based on the SACC to the UN classification for the purposes of international comparison. The correspondence table is provided in the SACC data cube, accessible from the Data downloads section.

Consultation with Statistics New Zealand

It is the policy of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Statistics New Zealand (SNZ) to harmonise approaches to the collection of official statistics wherever possible. This policy was a consideration when SACC was developed and it was agreed that the SACC and the New Zealand Standard Classification of Countries should be the same as much as is practical.

The differences in category titles between the Australian and New Zealand classifications are:

| New Zealand Standard Classification of Countries | | Standard Australian Classification of Countries | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Code | Category title | Code | Category title |
| 1513 | Pitcairn Island | 1513 | Pitcairn Islands |
| 1601 | Antarctica | 1601 | Adelie Land (France) |
| 1601 | Antarctica | 1602 | Argentinian Antarctic Territory |
| 1601 | Antarctica | 1603 | Australian Antarctic Territory |
| 1601 | Antarctica | 1604 | British Antarctic Territory |
| 1601 | Antarctica | 1605 | Chilean Antarctic Territory |
| 1601 | Antarctica | 1606 | Queen Maud Land (Norway) |
| 1601 | Antarctica | 1607 | Ross Dependency (New Zealand) |
| 21 | United Kingdom | 21 | United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man |
| 2101 | Channel Islands | 2107 | Guernsey |
| 2101 | Channel Islands | 2108 | Jersey |
| 2402 | Faeroe Islands | 2403 | Faroe Islands |
| | (no equivalent category) | 2408 | Aland Islands |
| 3103 | Vatican City State | 3103 | Holy See |
| 3308 | Russia | 3308 | Russian Federation |
| 4202 | Gaza Strip/Palestine/West Bank | 4202 | Occupied Palestinian Territories |
| 5105 | Viet Nam | 5105 | Vietnam |
| 61 | North-East Asia | 61 | Chinese Asia (includes Mongolia) |
| 6101 | China, People's Republic of | 6101 | China (excludes SARs and Taiwan) |
| 6102 | Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region) | 6102 | Hong Kong (SAR of China) |
| 6106 | Macau (Special Administrative Region) | 6103 | Macau (SAR of China) |
| | (no equivalent category) | 62 | Japan and the Koreas |
| 6104 | Korea, Democratic People's Republic of | 6202 | Korea, Democratic People's Republic of (North) |
| 6105 | Korea, Republic of | 6203 | Korea, Republic of (South) |
| 8 | The Americas | 8 | Americas |
| | (no equivalent category) | 8431 | St Barthelemy |
| | (no equivalent category) | 8432 | St Martin (French part) |
| | (no equivalent category) | 8433 | Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba |
| 8434 | St Maarten (Dutch Part) | 8435 | Sint Maarten (Dutch part) |
| 9107 | Congo | 9107 | Congo, Republic of |
| 9108 | Congo, the Democratic Republic of the | 9108 | Congo, Democratic Republic of |

Economic classifications

Using the classification for economic statistics

Both the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) and its precursor, the Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics (ASCCSS), are suitable for applications in demographic and social statistics involving country information. The SACC differs from the ASCCSS in that it can be applied to a broad range of statistical applications including in economic statistics.

While the main structure of the SACC can be used for the production of some economic statistics (e.g. international merchandise trade), other economic applications require categories that incorporate broader geographic groupings and specific economic entities beyond those contained in the main structure. Therefore, broader classification categories (e.g. '0701 Africa, nec') and specific economic entities (e.g. '0718 International Capital Markets' and '0741 Reserve Bank Gold') are included as SACC supplementary categories to support applications in economic statistics. These categories are designed to reflect

international statistical practice and to facilitate international comparison.

The 'Supplementary Codes for Economic and other Country Groups' and the 'Supplementary Codes for Economic and other Entities' are listed in Table 2 'Supplementary Codes' of the SACC data cube, accessible from the Data downloads section.

Data downloads

All references to 'Gaza Strip and West Bank' have been updated to 'Occupied Palestinian Territories' in the data cube.

Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC), 2016

[↓ Download XLSX](#)

[163.23 KB]

Abbreviations

[Show all](#)

History of changes

[Show all](#)

Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 1269.0

